

Internationalism in our Workshops

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The Dalai Lama said that "more calm, more peace, more compassion, more international feeling is very good for our health." More peace, compassion and international feeling are also central to the International Baccalaureate (IB) mission. In this article I will explore the importance of international mindedness and some implications for IBNA workshop leaders in the North American context. Although I am starting from a regional perspective, the very nature of international mindedness makes it imperative to view these ideas as pertinent to workshops in the four regions of the IBO.

Most of the IB schools in the IBNA region are not "international" in the traditional sense of the word -- they do not cater to an expatriate community with English as the language of instruction in a host country with another language. Currently there are more state schools than "international" schools in the IBO. In the IBNA region, most IB schools teach students from the local community. They often have classes with large numbers of immigrants, but are nevertheless local, neighborhood schools. We must derive our definition of "international" from the curriculum itself.

What unites the IBO community of schools is our commitment to an integrated international curriculum. A recent study by Kenneth Tye concluded, "throughout the world, schooling is still seen as a major force in the building of national loyalties."¹ National, provincial and state curricula have always been designed to instill the values, history and perspectives of a particular society. The IBO offers local schools an international program for the entire school continuum, reaching beyond the local context.

"International mindedness" remains a difficult concept to define and bring alive for teachers in our workshops. As IB trainers, we contribute to the development of the skills, knowledge and attitudes of the teachers in our IB community of schools. We have an obligation to explore the meaning of internationalism at workshops and to give our teachers and schools powerful reasons to embrace it in their teaching and planning. In our teacher training workshops it will be important to explore the following questions with participants.

1. Why is it important to foster internationalism in education?
2. What will international mindedness look like in my classroom and in my students
3. How do we build curriculum around the principles of internationalism and the mission of the IBO as expressed in the mission statement?

1. Why is it important to foster internationalism in education?

The interdependence of peoples, communities and nations is becoming ever more evident. The environment is struggling to absorb the impact of six billion people and their technology on the planet. Martin Gannon once said, "There are as many reasons, and perhaps more reasons, supporting the view that global disintegration may be our fate rather than global integration."²

To avoid this fate is one of the goals of international education. Children educated for tomorrow's world must be equipped with the habits of mind that will allow them to act in meaningful ways, whether locally or globally. It is as important to understand the "other's" point of view as it is to understand one's own. When we learn to view our world not as "us and them" but as "us and us" we will come closer to finding solutions to the issues facing humanity that are

fair and just. An education that promotes international mindedness will provide young people with the skills, knowledge and values to confront these challenges and make meaningful contributions to their solutions.

Recognition of the value of internationalism in education extends beyond the IBO. OxfamAmerica defines internationalism as a civic value:

Integral to promoting a world of justice and equity is developing widespread public respect for the dignity and well-being of people in other parts of the world. This internationalism is at the core of the Oxfam mission and is promoted through our nationwide education program.³

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights is specific about the importance of international values in education:

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.⁴

Recent editions of Educational Leadership and Phi Delta Kappan have also been devoted to the area of international education.

2. What will international mindedness look like in my classroom and in my students?

There are overt as well as subtle ways to promote international mindedness in our students. The foreign language requirement of the program promotes internationalism in the student and the school by valuing the language of another culture. While the flags, international days and trips abroad are a starting point, the goal is growth to a deeper understanding over time. What we are striving for is not flag recognition, but the development of intercultural awareness and competence, which will foster a sense of cultural identity in our students. When we introduce our students to inquiries into the cultures, histories and beliefs of others on our planet and look for commonalities, we begin the development of international mindedness. It is said that, "International education builds respect and ties between nations, advances learning and scholarship, and is a powerful force in replacing myths and misinformation with knowledge and understanding"⁵

An international curriculum guides our students in developing the skills, knowledge and values necessary to be citizens of the world. The skills include interpersonal, communication and thinking skills, as well as research skills that allow them to be open-minded and inquiring individuals. Rich and varied opportunities to develop these skills should be addressed in our workshops.

Young people may not be able to care about global issues without knowledge of the world beyond their local communities. Knowledge will lead to caring, and caring will lead to action. Through action, our students can contribute to the building of a better world. Thoughtful curriculum design will help our students develop an international knowledge base so they can develop the capacity for the action integral to the three programs of the IBO.

The Primary Years Programme uses the attributes of the Student Profile to describe an internationally minded person. Students are knowledgeable and seek to make sense of their

world from multiple perspectives. Their communications with others are thoughtful, reflective and respectful. They genuinely care about their world, and are inspired to inquire deeply into the issues they face in their lives. They are not afraid to stand up for justice and for their beliefs.

3. How do we build curriculum around the principles of internationalism and the mission of the IBO as expressed in the mission statement?

Applying the concepts of internationalism to curriculum development will bring teachers closer to an understanding of how to impart international knowledge and understandings to the learners in their classrooms. An examination of the central concepts of internationalism within the context of the three programs should become an integral part of our workshop structures. The design of curriculum will come to include the conceptual frames of:

- The role of culture in our lives and the lives of others
- The interdependence of natural and human systems on our planet
- The role of peace education and conflict resolution in our world
- Environmental awareness and sustainability
- Citizenship and service as an expression of individual responsibility.

As internationalism becomes more meaningful to workshop participants, they will begin to make important connections to their own disciplines and programs. Teaching and learning will promote inquiry and the development of personal research skills. Ongoing reflection from all participants (administrators, teachers and students) will enrich the internationalism in the curriculum.

For the PYP, MYP and DP, internationalism has different applications, but not different meanings. Our commitment to international mindedness is the central idea of our program. Internationalism must be integrated into all learning, rather than viewed as an add-on subject. Assisting both individual teachers and whole schools in making internationalism implicit at all levels of learning is a primary goal of our workshops. The principles outlined in this excerpt of the *IBO mission statement* illuminate this goal:

The International Baccalaureate Organization aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.⁶

H.G. Wells wrote, "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe."⁷ As we consider the ravages of the past century, resulting from both conflict and progress, this statement takes on a renewed urgency. A deep understanding of the interdependence of nations, cultures, peoples and our fragile, overheating planet will be a prerequisite for the healing of our natural and political environments. An international education will lead young people to acquire the understandings needed for them to create a more secure, sustainable existence on this planet. If we must leave them with a difficult legacy, then we owe it to the next generation to also provide them with the tools they will need to make the necessary changes. The international curriculum we promote through the IB will give them these tools. To paraphrase H.G. Wells, "let the race begin."

References

1 Tye, Kenneth A., October 2003. "Global Education as a Worldwide Movement," *Phi Delta Kappan*

2 Gannon, Martin J. 2004. *Understanding Global Cultures, Metaphorical Journeys Through 28 Nations, Clusters of Nations, and Continents, 3rd Edition*. Thousand Oaks CA. Sage.

3 <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/about/>

4 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26, paragraph II

5 Wartella, E., Knell, Gary E. November 2004. "Raising a World-Wise Child and the Power of Media," *Phi Delta Kappan*

6 IBO Mission Statement, 2002:

"The International Baccalaureate Organization aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the IBO works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right."

7 Wells, H.G., 1920. *The Outline of History, Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind*

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